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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Happy Independence Day here in the U.S., a happy 4th of July! The weather hasn’t cooperated for today’s typical celebrations, but that cannot always be possible. Even the annual Boston Pops celebration on Boston’s Charles River was played out a day early due to storms and the fast-approaching Hurricane Arthur! But, the revelers are still out there, as witnessed by my neighbors out shooting off fireworks in the pouring rain! So much for common sense!

Until next time...

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Denny’s and Atari Partner To Remix Gaming Favorites!
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Satoru Iwata Re-Elected as Nintendo President!
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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Satoru Iwata Re-Elected as Nintendo President

Nintendo president Satoru Iwata has been re-elected to the board of directors at the company’s Annual Shareholders Meeting.

The meeting, which took place today in Japan, saw Iwata safely retain his position in the company despite being absent due to recent surgery.

It’ll come as a relief to Iwata, as his approval rating from investors has steadily been declining in recent years. It was riding high at 92.9 percent in 2011, but that dipped to 77.3 percent last year. His current approval rating hasn’t been announced, but we’re working to track it down.

There were serious concerns earlier this year that the Nintendo president could be voted out following a slump in his internal approval rating and another annual loss, but it seems investors are keen to see him remain at the helm, for another year at least.

With the news that Mario Kart 8 has managed to sell over 2 million copies however, perhaps this will be the year Nintendo’s fortunes turn around.

Phantasy Star Online 2 Still Down, So What Exactly Is A DDoS ?

Another day has gone by and Phantasy Star Online 2 (PSO2) is still down. Sega is pleading with customers to be patient and give them another 24 hours as they are still under heavy assault by a massive DDoS attack on their systems.

Last time we discussed this here on ModVive we focused on the cultural politics surrounding the game, and singled out some possible culprits based on that ongoing drama. This time we ll take a step back and look at what exactly a DDoS attack is, how they are carried out, and the usual reasons why they happen.

What is a DDoS?

DDoS stands for Distributed Denial of Service. The purpose of the attack is to bring a server, usually hosting a webpage, to its knees. How? When a computer receives a request it must answer it, even to tell that request to go shove it. A DDoS attack floods said server system with so many requests it can t handle them all, thus no one else can connect and it can potentially lock up a system if it s a big enough attack.

How Would You Pull Off a DDoS?

So how do they do this? Well back in the day, and by that I mean as little as a few years ago, you d just run some kiddy script and you could kill any low level website in under an hour from the comfort of your basement with the power of your average desktop computer. This was a bad idea for a number of reasons, not least of which was the fact that you basically told the whole world who you were with a giant neon sign the moment you clicked nuke. When you connect to a server it logs the IP address of the sender every time and once you DDoSed a system the one thing they have is all the return addresses you ve sent them when you attempted to cripple their service.

Even if you hide behind a VPN (or three) or sit behind fifteen firewalls, it s not going to take long for the victim to connect the dots. So what s an enterprising asshat with a burning hatred of Bronies or super deformed hentei to do? Well what he could do is distribute the attack across multiple systems across the world. This is where the distributed in DDoS comes from, but sources vary. Sometimes it simply means that the attacker distributed the packets to you, other times they distributed the attack across a whole network. One way is to simply buy the server power

in various places with the necessary software and simply pull the trigger remotely. Another is to trigger a botnet that has infected machines around the world silently listening for the command to begin the assault on all of that dreaded tentacle porn.

Why Would Someone Initiate a DDoS Attack?

This is where the profit motive comes into play. All of the above is expensive, and that money has to come from somewhere. What usually happens during a modern attack is information theft. Using the DDoS as cover, systems can be compromised that can allow hackers to get into customer and transaction records and give them easier access to sellable info like credit card numbers while the IT department is busy putting out all of the other fires caused by the initial attack.

Sega has claimed that this has not happened in this instance, which is usually an indication that it wasn t tried for at all. Otherwise we would all be prompted to change our passwords and contact our banks by now just in case. This leads a lot of credence to the angry sub-group theory except for the fact that they would still have to shell out a lot of cash to keep an attack like this going, which leads us to one last guess as to who is behind this.

Who is Responsible for the DDoS?

Potentially the culprit could be none other than China. Their hatred of the free world s access to waifu anime funtime has been well known and this key strike against the world s leading supply of under aged bikini clad avatars controlled by middle aged men will be a day that will live in infamy! Oh, what s that? They have their own MMO s and one of them is sponsored by martial arts superstar Jet Lee? So why would they attack PSO2?

Because they wouldn t, at least not intentionally. The problem with a botnet controlled DDoS is that it s automated and sometimes there s unintended collateral damage. China has launched the largest DDoS in history using such a botnet against websites that have been organizing the democracy movement in Hong Kong, and there has been quite a few online services swept up in the attack. It s possible that the server system PSO2 is housed in is also hosting target websites, and it s gotten caught in the crossfire, or that the acronym PSO is within the target parameters which explains why other PSO related sites have also been hit.

But this is all just speculation at this point and there won t be any answers until the servers come back up and the IT staff does a post mortem on the attack. Whether its racists, anti-racist, angry customers, potential customers, or the Chinese government, the only thing that matters to most PSO2 players is when they ll finally be able to get in and whack yellow penguins with lightning katanas until bikini s fall out, and Sega assures everyone that this day is coming soon.

Phantasy Star Online 2 DDoS Attack Follow-up

On Phantasy Star Series Official Blog, a follow-up report about suspension of Phantasy Star Online 2 due to fierce DDoS attack has been uploaded.

DDoS attack against PSO2 still continues intermittently. Though the administrators began making preparations for recovery of the service, it will take more time to restart the game server.

Besides, maintenance of PSO2 and PSO2es official website will be carried out from 16:00 to 18:00 on June 26 (Thu). During the maintenance, these websites become unavailable.

The followings are the services under suspension:
* Download of PC edition game client* Download of PSO2 Character Create Trial Edition for PC* Purchase of Arc Cash (AC)
* Log-in to PSO2 for PC and PS Vita
* Log-in to PSO2es for smartphone

The administrators announced that schedules of Item Design Contest, PSO2 2nd Anniversary Memorial Character Contest, PSO2 2nd Anniversary Memorial Character Portrait Contest and various other events and campaigns will be adjusted.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Denny’s and Atari Partner To Remix Gaming Favorites

Denny’s, America’s iconic family diner, and Atari, one of the world’s most recognized publishers and producers of video game entertainment, have joined together to bring back a few classic arcade games, but with some unique twists.

Inspired by Denny’s new "Greatest Hits Remixed" menu - which features a selection of the diner’s iconic dishes all with a new culinary spin - three of Atari’s most famous games, Asteroids, Centipede and Breakout, have been remixed as "Hashteroids," "Centipup" and "Take-Out." Beyond just a new name, the games will feature diner elements, such as flying hash browns and syrup bottle shooters. All three games are available on the Denny’s mobile app for iPhone and Android devices.

"Our ’Greatest Hits Remixed’ menu celebrates a few of Denny’s most beloved dishes, by incorporating modern flavors for a fresh, new taste," said Frances Allen, chief brand officer for Denny’s. "We’re constantly looking to provide a fresh take on tradition for our guests, and this partnership with Atari allows us to extend the fun beyond our menu, and add a new spin on classic gameplay."

Each of the new remixed games incorporates diner items into play:

Hashteroids You’re aboard the SS Denny’s Condiment Transport ship and the mission is clear: deliver 40 tons of condiments to the 4th planet in sector 7d.

Centipup Once upon a time, a young boy named Danny came across a bottle

of syrup and with just a slight squeeze the bottle’s sticky contents had the power to turn anyone or anything into a fried egg.

Take-out A wall made entirely of delicious Denny’s breakfast items appears blocking all the take-out orders from their rightful owners. The only way to feed customers is to break down that wall!

"We are excited to be partnering with Denny’s on this partnership. Transforming our classic and beloved games into a retro, remixed promotion will be a natural way to expose our brand to a new generation and resonate with our long-time fans in a fun and unique way," said Fred Chesnais, Chief Executive Officer, Atari, Inc.

The remixed Atari games are just one of several new features available on Denny’s recently refreshed "Build Your Own" mobile app, which allows users to build and personalize their app exactly how they like, from their homepage layout to a variety of themes. Interactive elements such as the "Museum of Diner Art" are guaranteed to keep guests entertained, while regular features including the restaurant finder and menus keeps the latest Denny’s news at guests’ fingertips.

For more information about Denny’s Atari partnership or limited time "Greatest Hits Remixed" menu, including new remixed dishes such as the Red White and Blue Slam, Baja Moons Over My Hammy and Tuscan Super Bird, please visit www.dennys.com.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Facebook Admits ’Communications’ Error With Emotions Study

Facebook "communicated really badly" about a controversial study in which it secretly manipulated users’ feelings, the social network’s chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg admitted Wednesday.

The company clandestinely altered the emotional content of feeds of nearly 700,000 users for a week in 2012, giving some sadder news and others happier news in a study aimed at better understanding "emotional contagion".

The research, published last month, has prompted online anger and questions about the ethics of the research and forced Facebook on the defensive.

It was an experiment as part of product testing, Sandberg told a women’s business seminar in New Delhi when asked whether the study was ethical.

"We communicated really badly on this subject," she said, before adding: "We take privacy at Facebook really seriously."

Sandberg, who was in India to promote her gender-equality book "Lean In" and meet leaders of Indian companies and senior politicians, declined to speak to reporters asking further questions.

The comments came as several European data protection regulators began looking into whether Facebook broke privacy laws when it carried out the study.

British authorities will question Facebook over the experiment, officials said Wednesday.

The Information Commissioner’s Office, Britain’s independent data watchdog, is liaising with the Irish data protection authority and seeking "to learn more about the circumstances", a spokesman said.

The study by researchers affiliated with Facebook, Cornell University and the University of California at San Francisco, appeared in the June 17 edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

In the study, Facebook placed positive or negative posts in users’ feeds to see how this affected their mood -- all without their explicit consent or knowledge.

The results indicate "emotions expressed by others on Facebook influence our own emotions, constituting experimental evidence for massive-scale contagion via social networks", the researchers concluded, and noted emotion was relevant to human health.

Given Facebook s billion users and widespread influence, the experiment has raised worries over its ability to influence users moods and thinking.

Critics say research on people is normally governed by strict ethical regulations.

In a statement earlier in the week, Facebook said none of the data used in the study was associated with a specific person’s account.

It said it did research to make its content "as relevant and engaging as possible", which meant understanding how people respond to positive or negative information.

The researchers said the study was consistent with Facebook’s Data Use Policy, to which all users agree before creating a Facebook account.

But a number of users criticised the psychological experiment, posting words like "super disturbing," "creepy" and "evil" as well as angry expletives.

The study can be found at: www.pnas.org/content/111/24/8788.full.pdf

Facebook Experiment on Users: An Ethical Breach Or Business As Usual?

It’s not yet clear if Facebook broke any laws when it manipulated the news feed content of nearly 700,000 users without their explicit consent to test whether social networks can produce "emotional contagion."

(It turns out, to a modest extent, they can.)

But the uproar after release of the results of this 2012 study is raising new questions on how pervasive such practices are and the extent to which they mark a breach of corporate ethics.

While it is generally known that Internet companies such as Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Twitter, and Yahoo, claim the right to collect, store, access, and study data on their users, the Facebook experiment appears to be unique.

Not only is the company the largest social network in the world, the kind of information it accumulates is highly personal, including user preferences spanning politics, culture, sport, sexuality, as well as location, schooling, employment, medical, marriage, and dating history. The social network algorithms are designed to track user behavior in real time what they click and when.

The Information Commissioner's Office in the United Kingdom announced the launch of an investigation to determine whether Facebook broke data protection laws governed by the European Union. The Federal Trade Commission in the US has not yet said whether it is launching a similar probe or not. On Thursday, the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a civil liberties advocacy group in Washington, filed a formal complaint with the FTC, urging action.

The experiment, conducted over a week in January 2012, targeted 689,003 users who were not notified that their news feed content was being manipulated to assess their moods in real time. The study determined that an increase in positive content led to users posting more positive status updates; an increase in negative content led to more negative posts.

What alarmed many Internet activists wasn't the use of metadata for a massive study, but rather the manipulation of data to produce a reaction among users, without their knowledge or consent, which they see as a violation of corporate ethics.

It s one thing for a company to conduct experiments to test how well a product works, but Facebook experiments are testing loneliness and family connections, and all sorts of things that are not really directed toward providing their users a better experience, says James Grimmelmann, a law professor and director of the Intellectual Property Program at the University of Maryland Institute for Advanced Computer Studies in College Park.

These are the kinds of things that never felt part of the bargain until it was called to their attention. It doesn t match the ethical trade we felt we had with Facebook, Professor Grimmelmann says.

Many academics studying tech and online analytics worry about the ethics involving mass data collection. A September 2013 survey by Revolution Analytics, a commercial software provider in Palo Alto, Calif., found that 80 percent of data scientists believe in the need for an ethical framework governing how big data is collected.

Facebook leaders expressed remorse, but they stopped short of apologizing for the experiment, which reports show reflect just a small portion of the studies that the company regularly conducts on its nearly 1 billion users. On Wednesday, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg told The Wall Street Journal the study was merely poorly communicated.... And for that

communication, we apologize. We never meant to upset you.

In response to its critics, Facebook notes that policy agreements with users say that user data can be used for research. However, the term research was added in May 2012, four months after the study took place. Others say the complexities of the tests require stricter oversight, now that it is known the company has been conducting hundreds of similar experiments since 2007 without explicitly notifying the public.

Burying a clause about research in the terms of use is not in any way informed consent," says Jenny Stromer-Galley, an associate professor who studies social media at the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University in New York.

"The issue is that people don t read terms of use documents, and ethical principles mandate that people involved in basic research must be informed of their rights as a participant, she adds.

Some say Facebook could have avoided the controversy simply if it had provided more transparency and allowed its users to opt out.

Lance Strate, professor of communications and media studies at Fordham University in New York City, says that the revelations, which are among many such privacy violations for Facebook, suggest social networks have outlived their purpose because they no longer adhere to the Internet values of openness, honesty, transparency, and free exchange.

With this move, Facebook has violated the essential rules of online culture, and now begins to appear as an outsider much like the mass media industries. It is almost impossible to recover from the breaking of such taboos, and the loss of faith on the part of users. Zuckerberg started out as one of us, but now we find that he is one of them, Professor Strate says.

EPIC Fail: Facebook Study Provokes Formal Complaint from Privacy Group

On Thursday, the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) filed a complaint against Facebook with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), requesting the company be investigated. The thirteen page complaint (PDF) states Facebook purposefully messed with people s minds in order to conduct psychological research, referring to a study which was recently published in cooperation with Cornell researchers. Over the course of a week in 2012, approximately 700,000 users newsfeeds were purposefully manipulated so users saw either more sad news or more happy news. The researches reported a successful study, claiming to have proven emotional states can be transferred to others via emotional contagion, leading people to experience the same emotions without their awareness.

The study has since come under considerable criticism for its lack of upfront transparency, and potentially damaging effects. Attempting to minimize the negative perception of the study, Adam Kramer, one of Facebook s researchers, claims the effects were actually quite small. Others have pointed out, however, the actual impact of the study is irrelevant, as final results could not have been known prior to its completion. The complaint alleges that at the time of the experiment, Facebook did not state in the Data Use Policy that user data would be

used for research purposes. EPIC argues the company, currently required to protect user privacy by a 20 year agreement with the FTC, conducted the study illegally and unethically.

EPIC is not the only group attempting to take action against Facebook. Center for Digital Democracy director Jeffrey Chester claims he too has contacted regulators, and his group is also considering filling an official complaint. Currently, they plan to speak to the FTC during the next week about what they perceive to be a violation of law.

Facebook responded adamantly to the complaints against the study, releasing a statement which reads, When someone signs up for Facebook, we ve always asked permission to use their information to provide and enhance the services we offer. To suggest we conducted any corporate research without permission is complete fiction. It goes on to state that companies that want to improve their services use the information their customers provide, whether their privacy policy uses the word research or not. On Wednesday, however, COO Sheryl Sandberg made an apology, defending the study s purpose. but calling it poorly communicated.

Social media users expressed their outrage and suspicion over the whole affair. Facebook is certainly not a new name in controversy concerning internet security and privacy. The more its users, and those of similar websites, learn, the more people have a tendency to worry. The controversy has also raised some concern for whether a notice or disclaimer in the documents detailing the terms of use is sufficient or ethical, given that so many users never read them. Whether or not the FTC will find Facebook in the wrong is yet to be seen.

NSA’s Internet Monitoring Said To Be Legal

The first time the bipartisan Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board dissected a National Security Agency surveillance program, it found fundamental flaws, arguing in a January report that the NSA’s collection of domestic calling records "lacked a viable legal foundation" and should be shut down.

But in its latest study, the five-member board takes the opposite view of a different set of NSA programs revealed last year by former NSA systems administrator Edward Snowden.

The new report, which the board was to vote on Wednesday, found that the NSA’s collection of Internet data within the United States passes constitutional muster and employs "reasonable" safeguards designed to protect the rights of Americans.

The board, whose members were appointed by President Barack Obama, largely endorsed a set of NSA surveillance programs that have provoked worldwide controversy since Snowden disclosed them. However, the board’s report said some aspects of the programs raise privacy concerns meriting new internal intelligence agency safeguards.

Under a provision of the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act known as Section 702, the NSA uses court orders and taps on fiber optic lines to target the data of foreigners living abroad when their emails, web chats, text messages and other communications traverse U.S.

telecommunications systems.

Section 702, which was added to the act in 2008, includes the so-called PRISM program, under which the NSA collects foreign intelligence from Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Apple and nearly every other major American technology company.

U.S. intelligence officials and skeptical members of Congress have agreed that Section 702 has been responsible for disrupting a series of terrorist plots and achieving other insights.

The board said the programs have "led the government to identify previously unknown individuals who are involved in international terrorism, and it has played a key role in discovering and disrupting specific terrorist plots aimed at the United States and other countries."

Because worldwide Internet communications are intermingled on fiber optic lines and in cyberspace, known as the cloud, the collection inevitably sweeps in the communications of Americans with no connection to terrorism or foreign intelligence. Activists have expressed concern that a secret intelligence agency is obtaining private American communications without individual warrants. Some have questioned how such a program could be legal under the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution.

The board, including a Democratic federal judge, two privacy experts and two former Republican Justice Department officials, found that the NSA monitoring was legal and reasonable and that the government takes steps to prevent misuse of Americans' data. Those steps include "minimization" that leaves out the names of Americans from intelligence reports unless they are relevant.

"Overall, the board finds that the protections contained in the Section 702 minimization procedures are reasonably designed and implemented to ward against the exploitation of information acquired under the program for illegitimate purposes," said the report. "The board has seen no trace of any such illegitimate activity associated with the program."

That said, the board noted that the rules "potentially allow a great deal of private information about U.S. persons to be acquired by the government."

The board was troubled by the "unknown and potentially large scope of the incidental collection of U.S. persons' communications," and collection of communications about a target, such as a foreign terrorist organization, that could capture two innocent Americans discussing the organization.

The report proposals some rule-tightening. For example, the board recommends that NSA and CIA analysts query Section 702 data using the names or email addresses of Americans "only if the query is based upon a statement of facts showing that it is reasonably likely to return foreign intelligence information."

Section 702 has its roots in the Terrorist Surveillance Program, a collection program President George W. Bush ordered after the 9/11 attacks without seeking a change in the law. After administration lawyers deemed aspects of it illegal, and after so-called warrantless wiretapping was disclosed in news reports, Congress essentially legalized the program in 2008.

Obama, then a senator running for president, voted in favor of the bill.

NSA Targeted German Privacy Activist

German media reported Thursday that users and supporters of a popular online anonymity tool are among those automatically singled out for special attention by U.S. security services.

The report by public broadcasters WDR and NDR says the code from the National Security Agency’s XKeyscore software reveals the NSA’s interest in anyone who uses a program called Tor that can obscure a person’s digital trail.

The code for the software, which was created to filter through vast amounts of data to find information of interest to U.S. intelligence, also monitors a handful of key computers that act as phone books for the Tor network, the report said.

One of those computers reportedly belongs to Sebastian Hahn, a German student and online privacy activist.

The report came on the day German lawmakers began hearing expert testimony for a probe into the activities of foreign intelligence agencies in Germany. The inquiry was sparked by reports based on documents leaked by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, which showed that German citizens, including Chancellor Angela Merkel, were targeted by U.S. intelligence.

Former U.S. intelligence official William Binney told the lawmakers that Thursday’s report was plausible.

Binney, who left the NSA in 2001 alleging surveillance overreach after the 9/11 terror attacks, said factors that put people into "zones of suspicion" include visiting certain websites regularly.

The report published by WDR and NDR was co-authored by three privacy activists linked to the developers of Tor. One of them, Jacob Appelbaum, was previously involved in the publication of reports based on Snowden documents.

The creation of Tor was partly funded by the U.S. government to help dissidents in authoritarian countries communicate freely. But law enforcement agencies around the world have claimed that it also makes the work of identifying online criminals harder.

A Thumbs-up for NSA Internet Spying on Foreigners

Endorsement of the NSA’s Internet surveillance programs by a bipartisan privacy board deeply disappointed civil liberties activists Wednesday while providing a measure of vindication for beleaguered U.S. intelligence officials.

James Clapper, director of national intelligence, welcomed the conclusion by the independent Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board that the National Security Agency’s Internet spying on foreign targets in the U.S.

has been legal, effective and subject to rigorous oversight to protect the rights of Americans.

Activist groups panned the report as a dud.

It was a dizzying turnabout for a privacy board that in January drew criticism in the other direction for branding the NSA's collection of domestic calling records unconstitutional.

As they unanimously adopted their 190-page report on Wednesday, the five board members all appointed by President Barack Obama sought to explain their largely favorable conclusions about surveillance programs that have provoked worldwide outrage since former NSA systems administrator Edward Snowden revealed them last year.

At issue is a spying regime, first definitively disclosed in Snowden documents last year, under which the NSA is using court orders to obtain foreign customers' emails, chats, videos and texts from Google, Facebook and other U.S. tech companies under a program known as PRISM. The documents also showed that the agency is intercepting foreign data as it transits fiber optic lines in the U.S.

Yahoo, Apple, Microsoft, Twitter and Facebook did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Google and LinkedIn declined to comment.

The reputations of American technology companies have suffered abroad over the perception that they cannot protect customer data from U.S. spy agencies. Last week, the German government said it would end a contract with Verizon over concerns about network security.

European and other foreign intelligence agencies routinely demand cooperation from their national companies, U.S. officials say, but those operations have not been leaked to the news media.

The targets of the surveillance the U.S. privacy board was looking at this time must be foreigners living abroad, but the NSA also collects some American communications either by mistake, or because the Americans were talking to or about foreign targets. The programs come under Section 702 of the FISA Amendments Act of 2008, which legalized programs launched after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Last week, the Obama administration disclosed for the first time that it targeted nearly 90,000 people or groups under the programs last year. There are 2.4 billion Internet users worldwide.

In January, the privacy board criticized a different program authorized under Section 215 of the Patriot Act, through which the NSA had been collecting billions of American telephone records and searching through them in terrorism investigations. Obama has since called for ending NSA's collection of those records.

For the Section 702 probe, board members noted that they spent hours in classified briefings with intelligence officials, learning the details of how the NSA programs operate. And they came away convinced that the public debate about the programs had been rife with misconceptions.

For example, said board chairman David Medine, a former government privacy lawyer, the Internet surveillance "is not a bulk collection program" but instead targets specific foreigners living abroad for terrorism or intelligence purposes. And, he said, contrary to media reports, it is not true that the NSA will monitor a person if the

evidence shows just a 51 percent probability that he or she is a foreigner living abroad. The agency is barred from targeting an American without a warrant.

"We had the benefit of going into the CIA and the NSA and the FBI and the Justice Department and meeting with the key people who run the program and seeing demonstrations of how it works," Medine said.

"We concluded that the program is legal, valuable and subject to intense oversight," said board member Elisebeth Collins Cook, a former Republican staff member of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Some activists strongly disagreed.

"The board's recommendations would leave in place the government's ability to spy on its citizens along with their friends, family members and business partners overseas without any suspicion of wrongdoing," complained Elizabeth Goitein of the Brennan Center for Justice in New York.

The report appears to lengthen the already-long odds against lawmakers who want to put restrictions of the Section 702 programs. The House recently passed legislation seeking to cut off funding for searching 702 data connected to Americans, but key senators oppose any changes to the program.

The board did propose some modest rule tightening in order to further protect the rights of Americans, members said.

Critics, including Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, have accused the government of using 702 data for "back door" warrantless searches of Americans. Two board members, Medine and Patricia Wald, a retired federal judge, wanted the board to recommend a requirement that a judge approve queries tied to Americans. They also wanted Americans' information to be purged more regularly.

But the other three board members did not agree.

"We have seen no evidence of a back door," Cook said.

Board member James Dempsey, Vice President for Public Policy at the Center for Democracy & Technology whose own organization called the report a "tremendous disappointment" added, "Trying to limit discovery of data (already) in the hands of the government is not the right way to go here."

Wald cautioned that within the large volume of communications the NSA collects, "there will be much private and confidential information" about Americans which criminal investigators would need a warrant to obtain. While the information could not be used in a criminal case, it is subject to searching by the NSA, CIA and FBI, and could be used, for example, to put someone on a no-fly list.

NSA Chief Says Terrorists Are Changing Their Behavior Thanks to Snowden Leaks

More than a year ago, former NSA contractor Edward Snowden began leaking thousands of confidential documents that he stole while working for the

National Security Agency. The documents shined light on a number of controversial spying methods employed by the government agency, many of which were considered violations of American citizens privacy.

There are very good arguments for and against Snowden s actions, and one of the most valid arguments against the leaks was the suggestion that terrorists would alter their behavior and strategies in order to avoid the now-public NSA monitoring tactics. As it turns out, the NSA has now confirmed that this is indeed the case but the problem apparently isn t as serious as many people had feared.

When Snowden first began leaking some of the confidential documents he collected, many people argued that terrorists would use the information about PRISM and numerous other NSA spying programs to alter the way they communicate. As a result, the threat toward America and its allies would increase dramatically.

In an interview with The New York Times, new NSA chief Adm. Michael Rogers confirmed that this is indeed the case terrorists are altering their communications in an effort to avoid known NSA surveillance methods. Contrary to the concerns voiced last year, however, Rogers believes that the NSA can still operate effectively to protect America and its interests despite the leaks.

 I have seen groups not only talk about making changes, I have seen them make changes, Rogers told The Times. Even still, he said that he doesn t believe the sky is falling.

Russian Lawmakers Pass New Bill Restricting Internet

Russia’s parliament passed a bill on Friday requiring Internet companies to store Russians’ personal data inside the country in an apparent move to pressure sites such as Facebook and Twitter into handing over user information.

Introducing the bill to parliament this week, MP Vadim Dengin said "most Russians don’t want their data to leave Russia for the United States, where it can be hacked and given to criminals."

"Our entire lives are stored over there," he said, adding that companies should build data centres in Russia.

The bill would increase pressure on social networking services which do not have offices in Russia and have become a vital resource for anti-government groups.

Both Facebook and Twitter refuse to hand over user data to governments.

Just days before the bill was formally proposed last month, Twitter’s public policy chief Colin Crowell visited Russia to speak with media watchdog Roskomnadzor. Few details of the visit were publicised, but access to user data is thought to have been top of the list.

Russia is also asking Twitter to open a local office, which the company has so far refused to do.

"Nobody wants to relocate to Russia, but I am pessimistic. I think (the

Russian authorities) will make them relocate the servers," said Andrei Soldatov, a journalist who tracks Russia's security services.

"For the most part, this is directed against Gmail, Facebook, and Twitter," he said.

If passed, the rules will not take effect until September 2016 but will provide the government with grounds to block sites that do not comply.

That could cause problems for Russian companies such as tourism websites and airlines that rely on foreign-based online booking services.

Google told AFP they need time to study the final version of the law before commenting.

Yandex, a popular Russian search engine, said by email that the company is already using Russian servers, but added that building data centres required by law from scratch would take more than the two years allocated.

Russia's Association of Electronic Communication (RAEC), a group that lobbies on behalf of Internet companies and also helped organise Crowell's visit, said the new measures would be detrimental to Internet users.

"Many global Internet services would be impossible," the group said earlier this week. "The bill takes the right of people over their own personal data away from them."

"They want the iron curtain all over again, with everything written on pieces of paper like in the Soviet Union," Vladimir Kantorovich, vice president at the Russian Association of Tour Operators, told AFP.

"I feel like the Duma wants to lock us in an armoured cell for our protection without asking if we need it."

The bill must still be approved by the upper chamber and President Vladimir Putin before it becomes law, but is only the latest in what appears as a concerted push by the government to crack down on Internet dissent.

Lawmakers have already passed a slew of restrictions, including a requirement for bloggers to register as media if they have more than 3,000 followers and a law directed against "extremist" language that could see Russians go to jail for up to five years for retweeting offensive information.

Conservative lawmakers are also discussing the possibility of widespread Internet filters that could only be lifted for people who hand over their passport information.

Google Hit By 70,000 'Right To Be Forgotten' Requests

More than 70,000 people have already asked Google to delete links about them under Europe's "right to be forgotten" ruling, with some of the world biggest news sites the first to be hit.

The search engine has restricted access to a BBC blog posting and several British newspaper stories under a legal ruling granting people a right to be "forgotten" in search engines, it emerged on Thursday.

Google said it had received 70,000 requests since it put a form online on May 30 as a result of the ruling by the European Court of Justice.

The court said that individuals have the right to have links to information about them deleted from searches in certain circumstances, such as if the data is outdated or inaccurate.

But BBC economics editor Robert Peston complained that Google had "killed this example of my journalism" after being informed that a 2007 posting about former Merrill Lynch chairman Stan O'Neal had been removed from certain searches in Europe.

The Guardian newspaper also said it had been notified that six links to its stories had been removed from search results, three of them about a 2010 controversy involving a now-retired Scottish Premier League referee.

The newspaper said Google gave it no reason for removing the link or a chance to appeal.

Reports in Europe late Thursday indicated that Google restored some deleted Guardian story links to search results, indicating the California-based Internet titan was refining the right-to-be-forgotten process on the go.

European news organisations have opened fire on Google for removing links to stories from search results in the name of adhering to the court order.

Mail Online, the world's biggest news site, said it had received notification that links to a story about the same Scottish referee, Dougie McDonald, had been removed from certain searches.

Other stories restricted include one about a couple caught having sex on a train, and another about a Muslim man who accused the airline Cathay Pacific of refusing to employ him because of his name.

"These examples show what a nonsense the right to be forgotten is. It is the equivalent of going into libraries and burning books you don't like," said Martin Clarke, the publisher of Mail Online.

He said the website would regularly publish lists of articles removed from Google's European search results, while the BBC and The Guardian also published links to the restricted stories.

The links remain visible on Google.com, the US version of the site, and the restrictions only appear to relate to certain search terms.

A commentary in The Guardian noted that a search for Dougie McDonald no longer brought up its story on Google.co.uk, but a search for "Scottish referee who lied" worked fine.

According to the story, McDonald was found to have lied about his reasons for granting a penalty in a Celtic v Dundee United match.

Google, the world's leading search engine, said that each request "to be forgotten" would be examined individually to determine whether it met the ruling's criteria.

A spokeswoman told AFP: "We have recently started taking action on the removals requests we've received after the European Court of Justice decision.

"This is a new and evolving process for us. We'll continue to listen to feedback and will also work with data protection authorities and others as we comply with the ruling," she said.

Google To Shut Down Failing Social Network (No, Not That One)

Google will shut down its early social-networking service, Orkut, which was launched 10 years ago but has failed to put Google ahead in what has become one of the Web s most popular businesses.

Google said it will shut down Orkut, which is widely used in Brazil and India but hasn t caught on more broadly, on Sept. 30, to focus on its other social networking initiatives.

The company declined to say how many users Orkut has.

Over the past decade, YouTube, Blogger and Google+ have taken off, with communities springing up in every corner of the world. Because the growth of these communities has outpaced Orkut s growth, we ve decided to bid Orkut farewell, Google said in a post on the Orkut blog Monday.

Orkut was launched early in 2004, the same year that Facebook, now the world s No. 1 social network with 1.28 billion users, was founded.

The service s shutdown comes as Google s social networking plans remain in question. In April, Vic Gundotra, the head of Google s social networking services, left the company.

Gundotra oversaw the 2011 launch of Google+, a social networking service similar to Facebook. Gundotra said in October that 300 million people visit the Google+ webpage every month.

Google has increasingly sought to position Google+ less as a social networking stream that competes with Facebook, and more as a means of establishing a unified user identity system to improve Google s various Web properties. Last year, for example, Google began requiring users of its YouTube site to sign in with their Google+ identities before posting comments about videos.

The company said it would preserve an archive of all Orkut communities that will be available from Sept. 30.

If you don t want your posts or name to be included in the community archive, you can remove Orkut permanently from your Google account, Google said.

Microsoft Ramps Up Protection for Outlook Email

Microsoft on Tuesday said it is scrambling Outlook email messages in

transit to thwart spying by governments or others.

Toughened encryption at Outlook and Microsoft OneDrive online "cloud" data storage service came less than a month after the technology titan got low marks in a Google ranking of such defenses against online snooping.

"We are in the midst of a comprehensive engineering effort to strengthen encryption across our networks and services," Microsoft vice president of trustworthy computing security Matt Thomlinson said in a blog post.

"This effort also helps us reinforce that governments use appropriate legal processes, not technical brute force, if they want access to that data."

US Internet firms are eager to fend off privacy concerns provoked by US online spying tactics exposed by former intelligence agency contractor Edward Snowden, who has taken refuge in Russia.

Microsoft also announced the opening of a transparency center at its Redmond, Washington, headquarters where governments can check the integrity of its software.

Google in June stepped up its effort to make it tougher for spies or anyone else to snoop on email, unveiling Chrome browser software for scrambling digital messages.

A test version of a software tool called "End-to-End" was released so Internet engineers can dabble with making mini-programs that plug into Chrome browser and encrypt Gmail messages in ways that shield them from eyes of everyone except senders and recipients.

In a move that put pressure on other services, Google broke down how much message traffic received from them was encrypted.

Photoshop 2014: Software Finally Worth Renting

In the beginning, there was Photoshop: the software, the verb, the phenomenon.

It was 1990. The program was entirely black and white (not even shades of gray), just like the Macs it ran on. It had 20 tool icons and six menus.

Over the next 23 years, Photoshop s maker, Adobe, did what all software makers have always done: it released a new major version every couple of years, piling on new features each time and charging $200 for each upgrade.

Then, in 2013, everything changed. There would be no more megalithic Photoshop versions every other year, Adobe said. No more version numbers, in fact.

Photoshop would become a steadily evolving, constantly improving entity called Photoshop CC, and you d pay for it as a subscription. You wouldn t buy it outright anymore. You would pay $20 or $30 a month, forever.

It was the first time a consumer software company had ever required you to rent its product, and the people were not happy. There were outraged blog posts, and petitions.

All of which, in time, faded away, exactly as Adobe knew it would and now, a year later, 2.3 million people have subscribed, either to Photoshop or to more complete sets of Creative Cloud programs, which include Illustrator, InDesign, Dreamweaver, Premiere, and so on.

What made the switch particularly infuriating was how little Adobe seemed to care about its customers, especially those who aren t on corporate expense accounts; for most of them, renting wound up costing a lot more than buying. Clearly, requiring subscriptions was beneficial for Adobe but what was in it for us?

The company s response boiled down to this: First of all, we ll give you 20 gigabytes of online storage space for sharing your documents. Second, we ll keep updating our programs all year long, slipping in new features when they re ready, so you get them sooner. You ll always be current with the very latest tools.

And, indeed, the first year of this experiment worked just that way. Photoshop received three minor updates: in September 2013, February 2014, and just now.

What s weird, though, is that the new release is called Photoshop CC 2014. It has a year label, just as in the olden days.

Why? Adobe says the perpetually evolving software blob idea wasn t entirely practical for people like the authors of Photoshop books, creators of Photoshop plug-ins, and for people using older operating systems (as Photoshop gets new features, sometimes it also gets new system requirements). All of these parties would be much happier if there were certain named baseline versions of Photoshop to write about, or write for, or plan around.

In other words, Adobe s programs will continue to receive updates every few months, but there will also be tied up with a bow year-named milestone versions.

When you subscribe to the full Creative Cloud suite, you pay $600 a year, or $75 a month. (There are student, corporate, and upgrader prices, too.) You get to download and install constantly updated copies of 14 programs: Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Dreamweaver, Premiere, Muse, the works. Reviewing the new versions of all 14 of the Creative Cloud programs would require more webpages than Yahoo has available.

But Photoshop is worth a closer look first, because it s Adobe s most famous, most-used program. And second, because Adobe has made permanent what was once a limited-time rental deal: Photoshop and the Lightroom photo-organizing program, both, for $120 a year ($10 a month).

That pricing changes everything. Now, renting Photoshop is actually less expensive than buying it (which used to cost $700 plus $200 every time there was an upgrade). After three years, you d have paid $900 to own, but just $260 to rent. At five, 10, and even 20 years, you d still come out ahead renting.

Only after 30 years would the buy and pay for upgrades plan start costing less. (The numbers would shift a bit if you sometimes skipped

upgrades, but the principle is the same.)

So what does the $10 a month get you?

My favorite new feature in Photoshop CC 2014: The program opens in about two seconds, and that s on a MacBook Air laptop. (The previous version took five seconds.) Opening Photoshop that quickly means it feels light on its feet; it no longer feels like a bloated behemoth.

The rest of the new stuff is designed to improve life in niche situations. For example, there are two new blur modes one that lets you create a spin blur. And one, called Path Blur, that lets you simulate motion blur in an amount and path that you specify.

There are powerful new typography features, too. You can search for fonts by name. And if you ve selected a type layer, you can try on each typeface for size, on your actual text, as you roll your mouse down the Fonts menu (just like Microsoft Word).

Over the years, Photoshop has sprouted increasingly clever ways of cutting a subject out of a photo, or just selecting it apart from its background to paste it into a different background, say, or to adjust its color. In Photoshop CC 2014, there s yet another way: the Select Focus Area command. It isolates the subject of a photo by detecting which parts are in focus and separating them from the blurriness of a background:

It works very well, at least as a starting point in making a selection; of course, it works only in photos where there is a blurry background.

Also handy: When you re dragging objects around, new indicators help identify how far apart they are from one another, and when you ve got them aligned.

If you have access to a 3D printer, you ll be happy to learn that Photoshop s Print Preview dialog box for 3D objects is more accurate and more flexible than before. You may even be happy to learn this: In earlier versions of Photoshop, when you opened an OBJ file containing multiple meshes and multiple groups, all meshes were imported as a single group in the 3D panel. Beginning the 2014 release of Photoshop CC, the structure of the meshes and groups is preserved during import and export operations.

If you have any idea what that means, that is.

But what you ll quickly discover is that most of them are fairly tweaky, edge-case features. There s nothing new that approaches the importance of layers (added in 1994), Actions macros (1996), multiple undo (1998), type on a path and Smart Guides (2003), or the Spot Healing brush and lens correction (2005).

Maybe that s just a sign of product maturity. Maybe there s just nothing missing that people need. Maybe Photoshop has pretty much reached its destiny. Heaven knows it s complicated enough already.

But there s another possible explanation: Maybe, now that we re all locked into paying a subscription fee, there s less incentive for Adobe to drive forward. We ve already agreed to pay for whatever is to come, sight unseen, so Adobe can get away with adding very little. This isn t the old days, when Adobe knew it wouldn t earn our upgrade dollars unless it knocked our socks off every other year.

Are you cynical enough to believe that theory? Actually, it doesn t much matter; even if Photoshop doesn t continue to develop at all, renting is now officially a better deal than buying.

Adobe, of course, strenuously insists that this whole subscription thing is all about the customer. That staying current and enjoying Adobe s online offerings is well worth the money.

Well, the elephant in the room would like to know this: If you re so sure we re going to love the subscription model, why don t you make it optional? Let us decide if it s worth it!

(That, after all, is how Microsoft does it with Office. You can rent it or buy it. Voilà: No public outcry.)

But, no, most of Adobe s professional creativity programs are now available only for rent.

I m a cynic, yes. But I ll admit it: Once you re into this whole Creative Cloud club, there is a nice psychological feeling of being up to date and connected. You get the little alerts that announce new versions ready to download. You have instant access to 700 typefaces online, ready when you need them. You can look over other artists work on Behance.net, Adobe s website for customer posting and commentary (or post your own work there). You can install your programs on two different machines (like a Mac and a PC).

I m not crazy about software-as-a-mandatory-subscription. I don t like that we have to put blind faith in the company not to jack up its rates, in effect holding all of our files hostage. I don t like that we re paying in advance for features whose quantity and quality we still don t know.

And I hope we don t see the day when Office, Quicken, games, and utility programs are available only for rent, too.

But for now, Adobe has found a price and batch of features that make sense.

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